The Royal Historical Society
of Queensland

JOURNAL

Volume XIII, No. 4 November 1987

The Role of Submarine *A.E.2* on Anzac Day

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Presented at a meeting of the Society 23rd April 1987

After the loss of *A.E.1* near Rabaul on 14th September, 1914 it was decided that *A.E.2* should return to England to serve the war effort in the northern hemisphere with the Royal Navy.

On the 31st December, 1914, the second Australian Expeditionary Force of about 15,000 troops and 3,000 horses, embarked in twenty transports, sailed from King George's Sound. The only naval escort was *A.E.2* in the tow of the *Berrima*. With much of the time under tow, and only two days rest in Colombo, plus the requirement to be continuously ready for action, the three officers and 29 crew found the passage back across the Indian Ocean even more uncomfortable than the one out.

The convoy left Colombo on 18th January, 1915 after four days of rest there and arrived off Aden two days later and anchored off Suez on the 27th. The following day the *A.E.2* preceded the troopships through the Canal, being cheered and greeted by all the troops including the Australians from the First Expeditionary Force. During this passage the bridge had to be protected against occasional Turkish sniper fire, as the front line was within rifle shot of the

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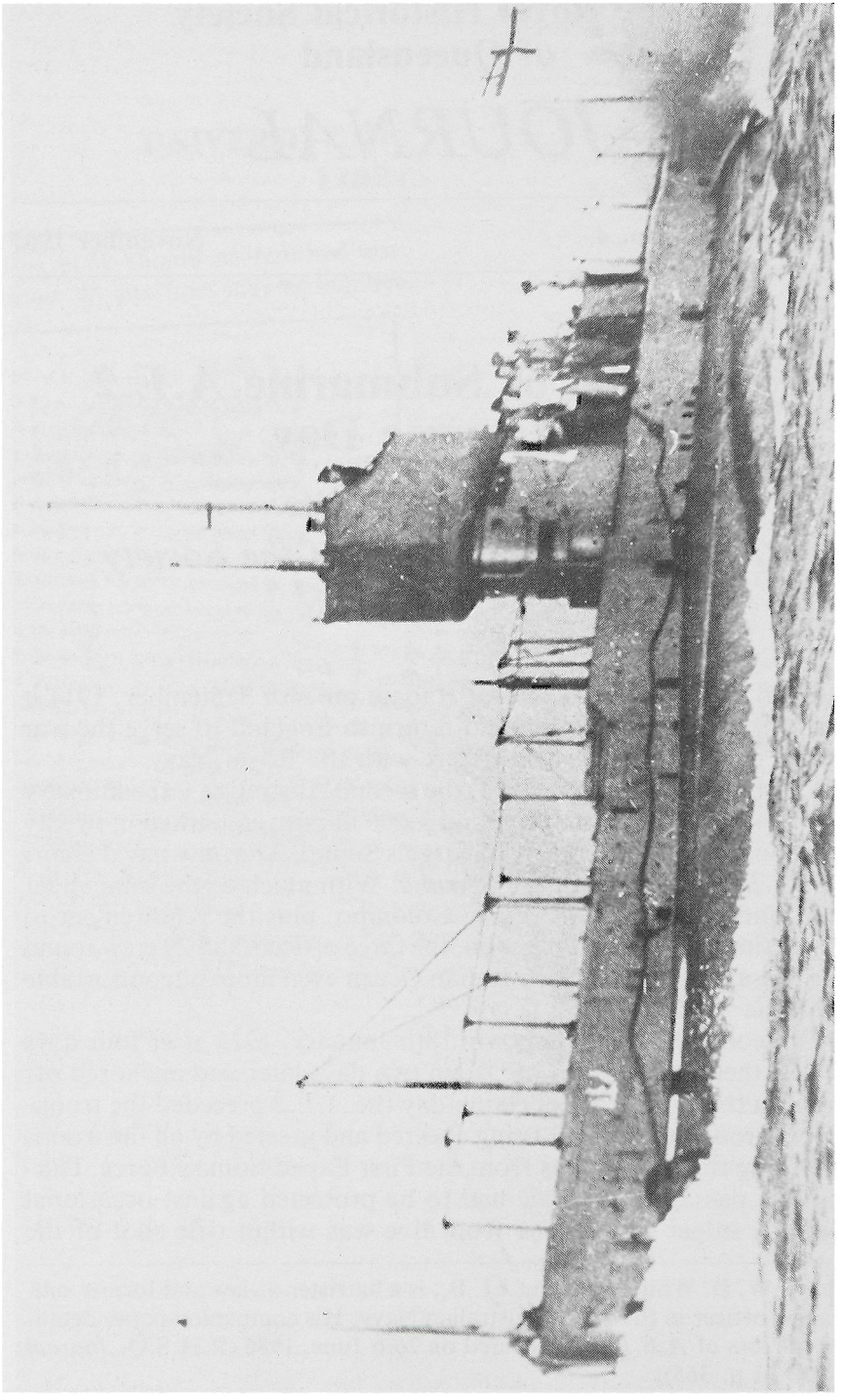


A.E. 2: *photograph presented to H.M.A.S.* Platypus *submarine collection by Lt. Cdr. Nichols of the* A.E. 2.

Canal. The Admiralty signal as to her employment directed her Commanding Officer, Commander H. H. G. D. Stoker R.N., not to Home Waters, as was expected, but to support the Dardanelles campaign.

The submarine arrived on 5th February at Tenedos Island and joined the B Class boats already there. Being the only one of the latest E class, and being Australian, gave her a particular pride of place. The submarine depot ship was the *Hindu Kush*, formerly the merchant ship *Hindustan*.[1] The day after arrival, *A.E.2* performed her first patrol in the mouth of the Dardanelles, and thereafter patrolled on alternate days, sharing the duties with the other submarines.[2] In the middle of February the arrival of further extensive naval forces in preparation for the naval attack on the forts necessitated the removal of the base from Tenedos back to Port Mudros, on Lemnos Island, a distance of some 40 miles. Thereafter, because of the increased distance, patrolling was for four days in the Straits, and four days rest back at Mudros.

At the time that *A.E.2* arrived the battle fleet was being reinforced. By 19th February, when firing commenced on the outer Turkish forts, there were 12 British and 4 French capital ships.

On 15th March the Admiralty agreed to Admiral Carden's proposal for a general fleet attack. Next morning the Admiral was placed on the sick list by his medical officer, and command of the fleet was passed to his second-in-command, Vice-Admiral J. M. de Robeck. The result of this offensive was a decisive loss to the allied fleet. Mines struck the British capital ships so that the *Irresistible* was sunk, the *Ocean* abandoned, and the *Inflexible* severely damaged. The French *Bouvet* was similarly struck with the loss of the ship and 600 men. This reverse, brought about by mines, meant the end of the attempt at a purely naval penetration of the Dardanelles, and laid the ground for the military landings to follow.[3]

The submarines were involved in patrolling near the surface units during the bombardments and could often see the results of hits by the guns. Having no guns themselves they had no immediate task to perform and Stoker addressed himself to the problem of a submarine penetration of the Straits. It was a popular subject amongst all the submarine officers as they saw such a penetration possible only to submarines. Their submerged craft would be immune from gunfire but they were required to overcome, of course, the mines, patrol craft and quite difficult navigational hazards. These problems were described by Rear Admiral Sir William S. Jameson, as he later became, as follows:

> Even for surface ships the Narrows were a navigational hazard with sharp turns at Chanak and Nagara and strong 'sets' into the bays only 1,400 yards wide, the current flowed at no less than 4 knots.

> Nowhere was it less than 2½ knots and something like full speed would have to be used for about four miles — a heavy drain on the battery. Intelligence believed (accurately, as it proved) that there were five lines of mines between Sara Siglar Bay and Nagara, but in such constricted waters it would be impossible to run deep for long periods. Most of the passage would have to be made at periscope depth. All the waters through which he would have to pass were heavily patrolled by surface craft and the Turks had mounted guns along both shores, covering the Narrows and its approaches at point-blank range. The high speed necessary to make way against the current meant that the periscope would leave a considerable wake, and it was highly unlikely that a submarine would escape detection. Nor was this all. He would have to remain submerged until he had passed Gallipoli — a dive of about 35 miles, against an average current of 1½ knots. A simple calculation made it evident that the capacity of even an E boat's battery was only just sufficient for the journey.[4]

Stoker had a particular reason to press his case to be given permission to make the attempt. He was the most senior and experienced submarine commanding officer present, and had a proven crew. Apart from that he had the only E class, the only class with sufficient battery capacity, and he knew that other E boats were likely to join the campaign soon and their commanding officers would be looking for the opportunity for themselves.[5] During a quiet patrol, therefore, he composed a letter to the Commander-in-Chief giving a clear plan for an attempt and set out the reasons why such an attempt could well be successful. Stoker considered that now was an opportune time as the minesweepers had cleared the mines for three to four miles inside the Straits, and this would put him in sight of Chanak on commencing the passage. But the letter was delayed as the *A.E.2* ran aground that night on returning to Port Mudros on completion of the patrol (at 9:45 p.m. on 17th March). A light at the entrance to the harbour had been extinguished and Stoker was not told. Rescue operations were successful in refloating the submarine but she had to steam to Malta for repairs to 13 hull plates.[6]

Whilst the boat was at Malta the submarine depot ship *Adamant* arrived en route to the campaign, together with the submarines *E.11* (Lieutenant-Commander Nasmith), *E.14* (Lieutenant-Commander Boyle), and *E.15* (Lieutenant-Commander T. S. Brodie).

A.E.2 undocked on 16th April and left for Lemnos two days later after satisfactory trials, arriving there to berth alongside their new depot ship, *Adamant*, on 22nd April.[7] *Hindu Kush* was still parent ship to the five British B class and three French submarines operating from Mudros. The following day the crew of *A.E.2* were fallen in on the upper deck for public reading of a commendation by the Admiralty on *A.E.2's* work in steaming and escort of the Australian

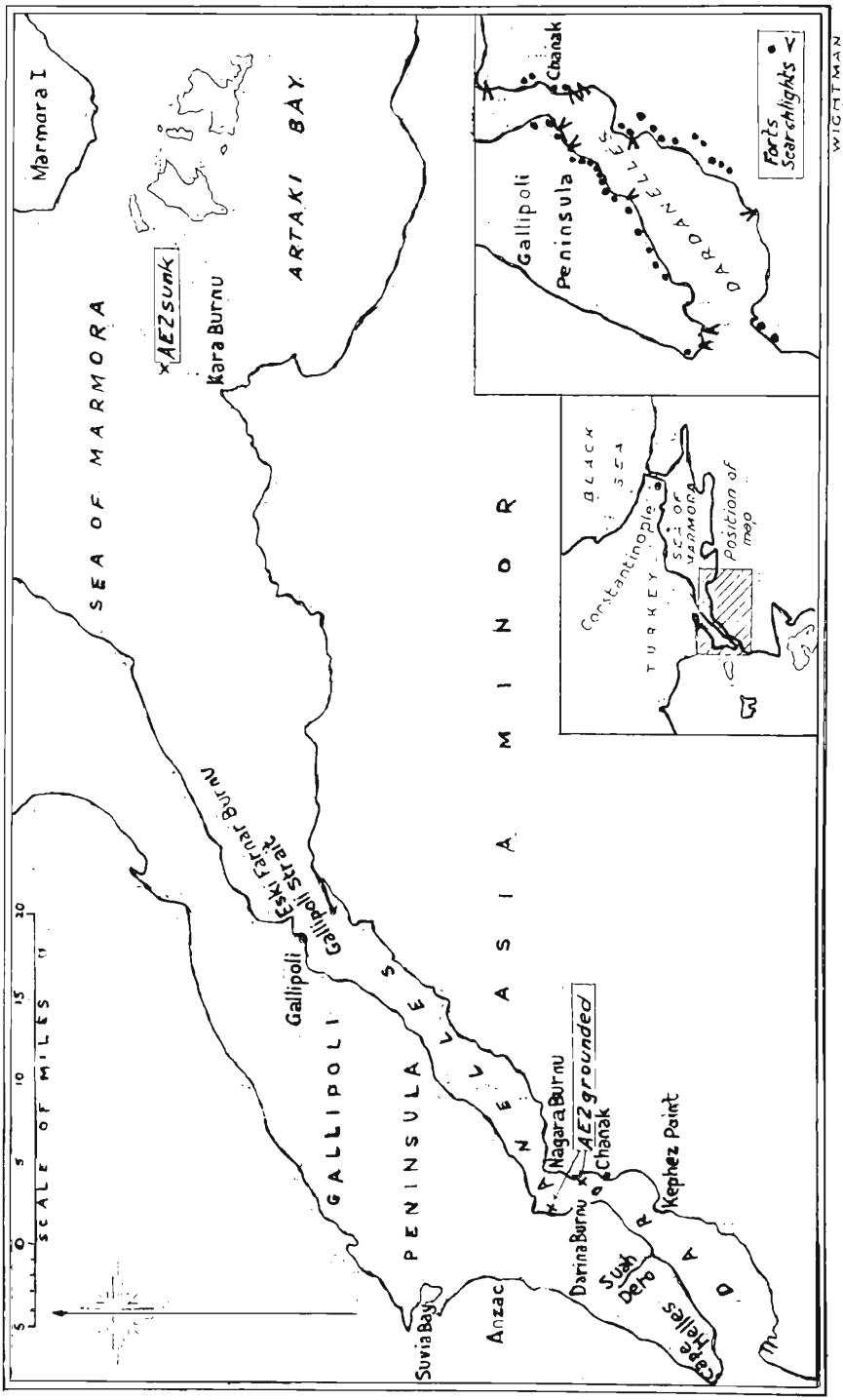
Expeditionary Force. They were recommended to receive seven days leave at the first opportunity. But this was never to be as that day Stoker received his orders to sail and the submarine proceeded from the commendation to store ship for their first attempt on a penetration of the Dardanelles. They sailed that afternoon for Tenedos and obtained further stores from H.M.S. *Swiftsure* that evening.[8]

During her docking in Malta *A.E.2* had been fitted with anti-net and anti-minefield attachments along the jumping wire which ran over the hydroplanes, the propeller guards and rudder; thanks to valuable information passed on from Nasmith of *E.11* resulting from the experience of their operations in the North Sea.[9]

FIRST PENETRATION OF THE DARDANELLES

Stoker had been keen to make the first attempt of the E boats but this was not to be. On 17th April the *E.15* under command of Lieutenant-Commander T. S. Brodie had made the attempt, been run aground by fierce currents, and stranded near Kephez light. The captain and six others were killed, and the remainder taken prisoner.[10] For fear of loss of the submarine intact to the Turks the *B.6* attempted to torpedo the submarine and the destroyers *Scorpion* and *Grampus* attempted to shell, but all were beaten back by Turkish shellfire. The *B.11* and another destroyer were equally unsuccessful. The job was finally completed in a daring night raid by two picket boats from *Triumph* and *Majestic* under the leadership of Lieutenant Commander E. Robinson by the launch of a torpedo which struck home and rendered the submarine useless.

Lieutenant-Commander T. S. Brodie had a twin brother, Lieutenant-Commander C. G. Brodie, who was on the staff of the Commander-in-Chief, and who played an important role in these events. He had been aloft in a seaplane to bomb the enemy and spot for *E.15* at first light on the day of the loss. Although he could see the stranded submarine, and noticed that a shell had hit the conning tower, he did not learn until some time later of the death of his brother from that shell. He had also embarked in *B.6* when she made her attempt to torpedo the stranded *E.15* and thus thwart the Turks in their attempt to haul her off intact and make use of her. It was those same currents which stranded the *B.6* on the shore only 100 yards from *E.15* on the night of the former's torpedoing attempt. The twins almost lost their lives in identical circumstances, but the *B.6* was able to get off and dive clear before being seen and shelled. It was this valuable information about currents gained in the *B.6* attempt which C. G. Brodie was able to pass on to the other submarines when they were briefed for their attempts. And it was C. G. Brodie who insisted on reading aloud the signal of *A.E.2*'s success to the tense war council, as will be related shortly. Brodie describes these stirring events in his book, *Forlorn Hope*.[11]



Movements of the A.E. 2 *in the Dardanelles and Sea of Marmora.*

On arrival at Tenedos on 23 April the Admiral signalled for the captain of *A.E.2* to report to the flagship. The landing was set for the 25th and no effort for its success was to be spared. The Chief of Staff, Commodore Roger Keyes, as he then was, took Stoker to Admiral de Robeck who enquired as to how a submarine penetration of the Straits might be achieved. Stoker unfolded his plan. It was agreed to, and if he should succeed the other E boats were to follow.[12]

Within two hours of the interview the submarine had stored and slipped from the *Adamant* and just after 2 p.m. lay off the *Queen Elizabeth*, while one of that ship's wireless officers checked the wireless equipment. She then proceeded to Tenedos, arriving at 6:30 p.m. and performed a short trim dive and took on further stores from *Swiftsure* which had not been available from the submarine depot ship. It was early in the morning of 24th April 1915 when *A.E.2* slipped and proceeded for the entrance of the Dardanelles. It was Stoker's plan to enter the Strait after the moon had set and to proceed solely on the surface for as far as he could penetrate undetected in order to conserve his battery power.[13]

The first attempt is well described in the diary later written by one of the crew, J. Wheat.

> A French submarine had been sunk in attempting the passage in January 1914[14] and one of our submarines on April 17, 1915,[15] so we were the third to make an attempt. We cast off from the *Swiftsure* at 1:30 a.m.[16] and proceeded to the entrance of the Dardanelles, it being our object to get as far as we could on the surface without being seen by the searchlights and before daylight. On entering the Dardanelles, between Cape Helles and Coum Kale there was a small gasoline searchlight on our starboard hand.[17] However we got by this without being noticed. We got about six miles inside the entrance. The searchlights on the forts of Chanak were very bright, but they seemed to be very careless as if not expecting to see anything. Owing to the searchlights we were forced to dive at 4:06 a.m. At this stage a very unlucky accident happened, our foremost hydroplane coupling broke. This was very serious as it meant we could not dive. Our only chance was to come to the surface and go back full speed on our engines as day was breaking and we were liable to be seen and fired on from the shore.[18]

And this they did, arriving back at Tenedos at 8:00 a.m. The blow to morale can be imagined. They had been active and busy all the previous day, up all night with the tremendous strain, expecting discovery and shelling at any second of the passage, and then the anxious race home before the encroaching dawn should reveal them. But they went about their work and the submarine anchored off Tenedos, the coupling was repaired by noon and they tested it with a dive.

THE SECOND PENETRATION

Towards evening the Commander-in-Chief, Admiral de Robeck, again sent for Stoker and met him with tact and understanding. After a full account of the events, he was commended for having penetrated as far as he had; and given permission to try again that night. Stoker's orders were slightly altered by the Chief of Staff, Commodore Keyes, however, to take account of the fact that the Army landing was to be on the morrow. He was to attack and sink, if possible, any mine-dropping ships found in the Narrows. This because the British capital ships would be operating in the Narrows firing in support of the landing, and they would be vulnerable to damage from mines floated down in the current (as had previously happened to *Irresistible*, *Ocean*, *Inflexible* and *Bouvet*). In the words of Commodore Keyes, even if a complete penetration could not be achieved, the *A.E.2* was to "generally run amok" off Chanak for the good reason that it was important to disrupt the Turkish naval forces as much as possible while the landings were taking place.

The *A.E.2* remained at anchor until early the next morning, when it weighed and set out on what was to prove the climax of its eventful career. Subsequent events are graphically described in the official report of her commanding officer, made in 1919, after his release from the Turkish prisoner-of-war camp.[19] (The author's comments where they appear within the text of Stoker's report are contained in brackets.)

> Having proceeded from the anchorage off Tenedos, I lay at entrance to Dardanelles until the moon set, and about 2:30 a.m. on April 25 entered the straits at about 8 knots. Searchlights from White Cliffs, Kephez Point, and Chanak were sweeping the straits. Weather calm and clear. As the order to run amok in the Narrows precluded all possibility of making the passage unseen, I decided to hold on the surface as far as possible. As I proceeded, the searchlights of White Cliffs, sweeping the lower reaches of the strait, forced me to edge towards the northern shore.[20] At about 4:30 a.m. being then not quite abreast of Swandere River, a gun opened fire at about 1½ miles range from the northern shore. (Otherwise known as Suan Dere. Presumably they were sighted by the lookouts of the battery of guns by the river.) I immediately dived, and at a depth of 70 to 80 feet proceeded through the minefield. During the ensuing half-hour or so the scraping of wires against the vessel's sides was almost continuous, and on two occasions something caught up forward became loose and scraped away aft. [Stoker's dilemma was that whilst deep he was relatively safe from mines, but ran the hazard of going aground. If he came to periscope depth for navigational safety he could easily strike a mine as they were set at shallow depth to explode on surface vessel hulls.] Having risen twice for observation in the minefield, which I considered necessary, as *E.15* had run ashore in this vicinity, on rising the

> third time I found the vessel in a good position, rather over to the northern side of the straits, and approaching the Narrows, some two miles distant. The time was then about 6 a.m.

Both *E.15* and later *B.6* had not gone below 40 feet when they experienced vicious tides and eddies which drove them both ashore at the same spot. But on getting off *B.6* had found stable water at 90 feet. As C. G. Brodie was in *B.6* at the time he would certainly have communicated this important information to Stoker.[21] There was also evidence that a strong counter current ran underneath the main outflow, and *A.E.2* and subsequent boats were aided by it. Hence Stoker was surprised at his third periscope look to find himself so far advanced up the Straits as to be only 300 yards from the Narrows.

> In order to take stock of the situation I remained at 20 feet depth with periscope up. The sea being a flat calm, the periscope was immediately sighted, and a heavy fire was opened from forts on both sides of the Narrows; the accuracy of this made observation through the periscope difficult. (Reference to the Map shows that he would have been within range of four to five batteries at this point.) I observed a hulk anchored off Chanak on starboard side of Narrows, and several destroyers and some small craft moving in higher reaches. As the hulk might be dropping mines, I decided to attack it, and edged over to starboard for that purpose. A small cruiser, judged to be of *Peyki Sevketk* type, previously unseen, now emerged from behind the hulk. Believing this to be more likely to carry mines, I considered it would be better to attack it. At a range of three to four hundred yards I fired the bow torpedo, at the same moment ordering 70 feet in order to avoid a destroyer which was attempting to ram on the port side. As the vessel descended, the destroyer passed overhead close, and the torpedo was heard to hit.

The Turkish account of the events of that morning differ in detail from that given by Stoker but it does confirm that the torpedo fired by *A.E.2* struck home and damaged the Turkish vessel *Peyki Sevket* causing the stranding of the vessel, although it was subsequently repaired and put back into service. Information supplied to the author of the Turkish account included as follows:—

> *Peyki Sevket* was ordered to search all the small ports and the European coast up to Haydarpasha. She was sailing in zig-zag fashion in order to find the submarine which could have been hidden in a small bay and busy with repairs when, near Bagados, all of a sudden the crew saw a torpedo coming towards them from the right hand side. They tried to turn to right quickly, but failed to escape from the torpedo. About 5 or 10 sailors were thrown overboard by the explosion. A life-boat was lowered and picked the sailors up. After the hit of the torpedo, the rudder-rod of the gunboat was bent and the wheel-gears and rudder were jammed in right hand turn position.

> After this incident the *Peyki Sevket* sailed slowly towards the coast, listing to her left. Since there was no connection between the rudder and the engine room, she made a complete turn and was stranded on the coast.
>
> The ship was secured with anchors both from the rear and front near the coast. At the same time, the submarine fired another torpedo, but this did not hit the ship and passed underneath, striking the coast without exploding. As a result of the hit by the first torpedo a torpedo of *Peyki Sevket* gunboat was dislodged and hung on the left side of the boat. After several efforts the torpedo was released and it struck the coast and exploded. The crew then abandoned the gunboat. Later the ship was brought to the military dock in Istanbul and repaired in three months.[22]

The ramifications of *A.E.2's* appearance in the Turkish stronghold were many. One of them was in direct aid of the Anzacs, then fighting desperately to retain their hold after the initial landing. A Turkish battleship in the Narrows had been shelling across the peninsula onto the anchorage off the landing beaches and its fire had compelled the allied transports to move further offshore to a safer position, with consequent disruption to the Anzac landing support. It appears that this battleship caught sight of the *A.E.2's* periscope just above Chanak and was forced to cease fire and run for her own safety, just when her fire was becoming most effective against the allied transports.[23] The Turkish account on this point was to a like effect and it pointed out that whereas the Turkish bombarding vessels had previously moved when necessary the presence of *A.E.2* necessitated their leaving the area entirely.

Stoker's account continues:

> As the cruiser, dead ahead, might be expected to sink almost immediately, I altered course a point to starboard to avoid becoming entangled with her. At the time I believed the vessel to be in the centre of the Straits. About four minutes later I altered back to the original course, and ordered 20 feet. As the vessel was rising, she hit bottom and slid up on the bank to a depth of 10 feet, at which depth a considerable portion of the conning tower was above water. Through the periscope I observed that the position was immediately under Fort Anatoli Medjidieh.

Chatterton later wrote that the reason for this grounding was that *A.E.2's* gyroscopic compass had wandered and that a similar wander was the reason for the loss of *E.13* in September, 1915, on Saltholm, Denmark,[24] but whether this was so or the currents were perverse has never been established. The *A.E.2* was in a similar exposed situation to the *E.15* when she grounded, but a factor in favour of *A.E.2* was that the guns of Fort Anatoli Medjidieh could not depress sufficiently to make a hit, and the guns of the other forts were at sufficient range to make accurate shooting difficult.

> As I looked, one of the guns fired, and the flash of the gun almost reached the top of the periscope, which I immediately lowered. For four minutes the sound of shell falling round the boat was continuous, and then, the efforts to refloat her proving successful, she slid down the bank to a depth of 70 feet, with head pointing down the straits.

The main efforts to refloat would have been to alter the trim of the boat and go full astern on both screws. Of course, Stoker had to use full battery power to get them out of the critical position they were in; but at the same time he would have been only too aware that if the battery was used to such an extent that it became exhausted they would be deprived of all propulsion when dived.

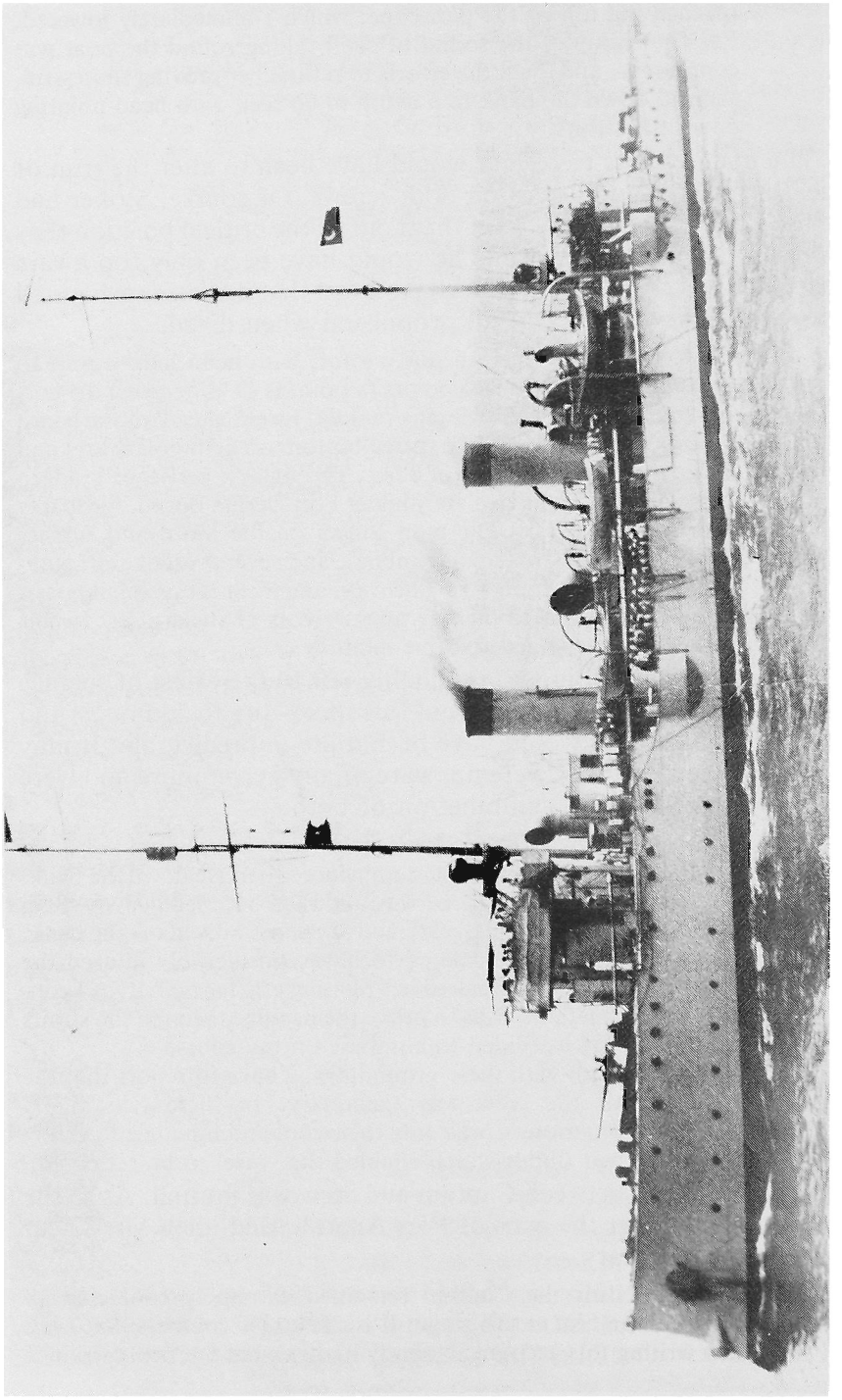
> I proceeded at 90 feet on port motor, with helm hard a-port to turn up straits, when two points (a point is 11½ degrees) off correct course, with head swinging rapidly, I went ahead on starboard motor. Vessel immediately struck bottom on Gallipoli shore, and slid up the bank to a depth of 8 feet. Through the periscope I judged the position to be immediately under Fort Derina Burnu, (probably the fort named Fort Diermon Burnu on the Map) and further observed two destroyers, a gunboat, and several small craft standing close off in straits firing heavily, and a cluster of small boats, which I judged to be picking up survivors of the cruiser. In this position we remained for five minutes.

This second grounding was probably due to the effect of surface current which ran its swiftest about this spot — up to 5 knots,[25] and the swirls and eddies would have been quite unpredictable. It may also have been that they were unaware of any gyro failure and were still relying on it, or a combination of both.

> As vessel was lying with inclination down by bows, I went full speed ahead. Shortly afterwards she commenced to move down the bank, gave a slight bump, gathered way and then bumped heavily. She, however, continued to descend, and at 80 feet I dived off the bank. The last bump was calculated to have considerably injured the vessel, and probably impaired her fighting efficiency; but, as I considered my chief duty was to prove the passage through the straits to be possible, I decided to continue on my course.
>
> In connection with these groundings, I have to report that the behaviour of the crew was exemplary. In these two highly dangerous situations it was only their cool and intelligent performance of their duties which enabled the vessel to be refloated.

The admiration between Captain and crew was mutual. As to the incident lying under the guns of Fort Anatoli Medjidieh Mr Wheat recorded in his Diary:—

> During all this the Captain remained extremely cool, for all depended on him at this stage. It is due to his coolness that I am now writing this account. Nobody knows what a terrible strain it



Peyki Sevket *torpedo boat.*

> is on the nerves to undergo anything like this, especially the Captain, as all depends on him.[26]

On rising to 20 feet shortly afterwards, Stoker observed the vessel to be in a good position approaching Nagara Point, with the destroyers, gunboats, and numerous other pursuing craft surrounding him on every side. At this, as on all other appearances of the periscope, the destroyers attempted to ram, and they dived to 70 feet. At this early stage of anti-submarine warfare there were no underwater detecting devices such as sonar, and all surface craft could do was shoot, ram and drag wires and chains underwater in an attempt to do damage. It was only when the periscope was visible that they knew the exact position of the submarine. Considering the dangers of rising to take observations in the midst of so many pursuing craft, and the danger of grounding on Nagara Point when near the surface, Stoker decided to attempt to round the point without further observation, and proceeded to 90 feet for that purpose. Having altered course by dead reckoning navigation, on rising to 20 feet some time later he found the vessel in good position in the centre of the Strait, heading for the Sea of Marmara with Nagara Point abaft the beam. He could see pursuing craft carrying out tactics astern of him below the point; but owing to the calm water the periscope was immediately sighted, fire re-opened and the chase resumed. He then dived to 90 feet and remained at that depth for half an hour.

Stoker goes on in his report:—

> On rising to 20 feet to observe, I found the pursuing craft in close attendance on every side, and just ahead (one on either bow) two tugs with a wire stretching between them. I immediately dived to 90 feet. Considering the situation, it seemed possible that our position was marked through catching in a drift-net, or by some other means, and I decided to run in on the Asiatic shore and await developments, as battery power then remaining was not sufficient to get far out into Sea of Marmora, and thereby gain a fair chance of shaking pursuit. I therefore altered course 8 points to starboard, and ran aground about 8:30 a.m., lying at a depth of 80 feet.

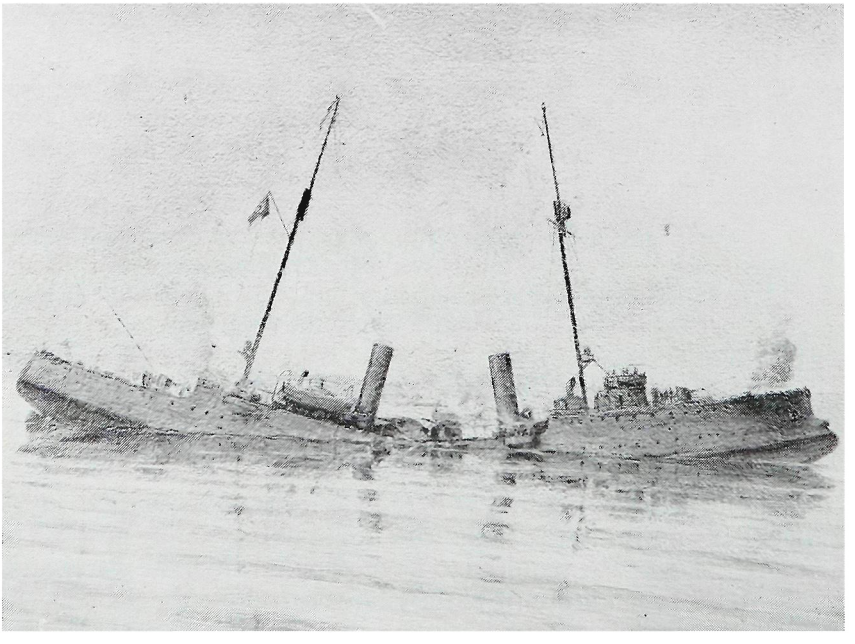
It being Sunday the Captain then held prayers with the crew, appointed a watchkeeper, and told the rest they were free to get some sleep.

CRISIS MANOEUVRES

Bottoming the submarine, as here, was a common tactic to conserve battery power as the submarine could not normally hover. To maintain depth it was required to be moving through the water and this required expenditure of battery power to drive the propellers. Hovering is possible for submarines, but it is a delicate manoeuvre, and contains the risk of coming to the surface unexpectedly; so this was no time for *A.E.2* to try it.

> At about 9 a.m. a vessel passed overhead, and something she was towing hit boat's side and jumped over. From this point on vessels continued to pass overhead at frequent intervals. As we were far out of the track of shipping passing up and down straits, I decided they must be searching for us, and about 11 a.m. considered it advisable to move to another place. The leaks occasioned by the last bump had caused a quantity of water to collect in motor bilges, etc., which water it was impossible to pump out, as oil mixed with it would immediately give away our exact position. The water was therefore carried forward, and emptied into beam-tube well etc. Consequently, on attempting to move off, I found trim had been lost, and all efforts to regain it without coming to the surface proved futile; so we remained in the same position throughout the day, while vessels continued to pass and repass overhead until 7 p.m.

As usual Stoker understated the position. When he attempted to move *A.E.2* off the bank, Wheat states that they found the trim had been lost to such an extent that the submarine immediately sank so that the depth needle went hard over to the 100 foot mark, and the pressure was so great on it that the needle actually bent against the stop.[27] How close the submarine came to crushing is not known. Driving the submarine back on to the bank was all Stoker could do.



The Peyki Sevket *heavily damaged by the* A.E. 2 *on 25 April 1915. The original of this photograph is at Istanbul Naval Museum.*

> At 9:00 p.m., I rose to the surface, found no ships in sight, and commenced to charge batteries. No ships passed in the Straits during the night.

The submarine had been shut down for over 16 hours and the air had become bad. The crew were thus able to breathe fresh air as the diesels drew it into the boat and also by taking turns to go onto the conning tower. Wheat wrote that the air was so bad slightly forward of the conning tower that a match would not burn for a fraction of a second. The design of the submarine, then as now, provided that running the diesels performed a two-fold function; that of providing power to the submarine and batteries and also changing the air.

Immediately he surfaced and the diesels started Stoker turned his attention to signalling his success back to the fleet. The wireless aerial flashed out its sparks in the damp of the night but the operator was unable to receive any answering call at this or any other time, despite extensive efforts and careful rechecking of the equipment. All they ould do was repeat the message time and again and hope that it was being received. It was received, and this gave rise to the second major ramification of *A.E.2's* feat so far as it directly affected the Australian landings on Gallipoli. (The first being the shifting of the Turkish battleship.)

THE IMPACT OF THE MISSION

The military landings at Gallipoli had, of course occurred meanwhile and about the time that *A.E.2* rose to the surface north of Nagara Point, General Bridges and his staff were becoming more and more anxious about the Anzac position. Units were disorganized; the men were reported to be utterly worn out; and there were no available reserves to meet the heavy counter-attack expected in the morning. A conference was held ashore at 10:00 p.m. in a gully off Plugge Plateau between General Birdwood, Major-General Godley (commanding the New Zealand and Australia Division), Brigadier-General Walker (commanding the New Zealand brigade), and General Bridges and his staff.[28] Upon being informed that the situation was perilous and that re-embarkation was strongly recommended General Birdwood dictated the following message for despatch to the Commander-in-Chief:

> Both my divisional generals and brigadiers have represented to me that they fear their men are thoroughly demoralized by shrapnel fire to which they have been subjected all day after exhausting and gallant work in the morning. Numbers have dribbled back from firing lines and cannot be collected in this difficult country. Even the New Zealand Brigade, which has only recently been engaged, lost heavily, and is to some extent demoralized. If troops are subjected to shell fire again tomorrow morning there is likely to be

> a fiasco, as I have no fresh troops with which to replace those in the firing line. I know my representation is most serious, but if we are to re-embark it must be at once.

The message was conveyed to Admiral Thursby, who repaired aboard the *Queen Elizabeth* as she arrived at the anchorage, together with Brigadier-Generals Carruthers and Cunliffe-Owen of the Corps Staff. Sir Ian Hamilton was roused at midnight by General Braithwaite, and in the Admiral's dining room (where Admiral Beatty was eventually to receive the surrender of the German fleet), there took place this important conference.[29]

While Sir Ian Hamilton was discussing the situation and taking up pen to write the reply, Lieutenant Commander C. G. Brodie came into the room with the signal heralding *A.E.2's* success. Ignoring furious signals from the Chief on Staff, Commodore Keyes, to retire, Brodie insisted on reading out the signal to the assembled officers.[30] The effect of the news was enlivening and the psychological impact at that precise time in history was momentous.[31] Further discussion ensued but now in a more optimistic tone and with the view of the staff officers fortified that there could be no question of re-embarkation. Commodore Keyes in his book, *The Fight for Gallipoli* (then Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Roger Keyes) wrote that the message "could not have been received at a more opportune moment". It is not known what Sir Ian Hamilton was about to write when Brodie read the signal but in the end he wrote the well known reply that kept the Anzacs there:

> Your news is indeed serious. But there is nothing for it but to dig yourselves right in and stick it out. It would take at least two days to re-embark you, as Admiral Thursby will explain to you. Meanwhile the Australian submarine has got up through the Narrows and has torpedoed a gunboat at Chanak. Hunter-Weston, despite his heavy losses, will be advancing tomorrow which should divert pressure from you. Make an appeal to your men and Bodley's to take a supreme effort to hold their ground. P.S. You have got through the difficult business. Now you have only to dig, dig, dig, until you are safe.[32]

At the time, of course, the crew of the *A.E.2* were not even aware that their wireless' message had got through. Years later Admiral Keyes, as he then was, told Stoker of the effect of his message.[33]

The third ramification of *A.E.2's* success was the raising of morale of some of the Anzac troops. Most of those who came to know of the success of *A.E.2* would have known the submarine from the convoy over to Suez; from the cheered passage through the Canal; and from operations out of Mudros. Soldiers clinging to the Gallipoli cliffs were informed by notices displaying the message:

> Australian sub *A.E.2* just through the Dardanelles. Advance Australia.[34]

Thus the effects of such a resounding success by the sailors in the *A.E.2* could only have been beneficial to the morale of their embattled countrymen.

As well as the effect of Stoker's signal on the conference concerning the Anzac landing and on the Anzacs fighting on the peninsula there was an important effect created among the British and French submariners. One can imagine the elation felt by them on receipt of the news and the feeling that the loss of their comrades in *E.15* and *Saphir* had been vindicated. Within a few hours of the receipt of Stoker's signal Lieutenant Commander Boyle was signalled to report aboard the flagship. He was briefed by Commodore Keyes with more enthusiasm than precise instruction and at 3:00 a.m. on the 27th *E.14* was under way in the Straits to repeat the feat now shown to be possible[35] and she was followed by others in due course.

The situation into which the submarines led by *A.E.2* thrust themselves had an important effect upon the Turkish communications supply and reinforcements to their troops opposing the Gallipoli landings. Turkey had a paucity of railway communications at the outbreak of war, and a shortage of locomotives and rolling stock. This meant that her main lines of communications from Constantinople to Gallipoli and from the south of Marmora to Gallipoli were by sea. The only alternative was the link to the Gallipoli peninsula by rail to Uzun Keupri on the Adrianople line, and thence by road via Keshan and the isthmus of Bulair. The distance from Uzun Keupri to the Narrows by road was about 100 miles.[36]

With the appearance of *A.E.2* the vital sea lane to the Gallipoli peninsula was threatened just at a critical time after the landings. As the Official History notes:—

> Her activity [A.E.2], and that of the *E.11* who followed her on the 18th May, was of immense value to the Expeditionary Force, and towards the end of the month the Turkish sea-communications had been completely disrupted. After that day, thanks to the continued activity of the submarine service, no more reinforcements were sent from Constantinople by sea, and though the enemy continued to despatch food and stores in small vessels which hugged the coast and moved only at night, all Turkish writers agree that the maintenance of their army on the peninsula remained throughout the campaign an acutely anxious problem.[37]

But of course, the disruption by the submarines did not stop there. They carried the war right into the harbours, an example being Nasmith in *E.11* sinking the *Stambul* in Constantinople harbour itself, the first such feat for 500 years, and it threw the city into confusion for some time. They also attacked the trains as they ran towards the peninsula as the line lay close to the coast for part of the distance. The First Lieutenant of *E.11* even swam ashore with

explosives and damaged part of the line. Further, the submarines shelled the road where it lay close to the coast and by making prearranged ranging shots they would wait until marching soldiers or other military targets had reached a certain part of the road and then surface and shell them to great effect.

It may well be that if *A.E.2* had not made the passage then probably *E.11*, *E.14* or one of the others would have done so. But the achievement of Stoker and the crew of *A.E.2* was that they showed that the feat was possible. Before their success three submarines had already fallen victim to the traps and hazards of the Narrows. By careful planning and outstanding courage and ship-handling Stoker pioneered the route, so that before they set out Boyle, Nasmith etc. all had the comfort and encouragement of knowing that the feat was possible.

The net effect of the submarine operations was devastating. Exclusive of the damage done by *E.20* and the French *Turquoise* the known Turkish losses to submarines in the campaign were:—[38]

Battleships	1
Destroyers	1
Gunboats	5
Transports	11
Steamers	44
Sailing vessels	148

As one German writer put it, commenting on the work of the submarines in the Marmora:

> The depredations of these unwelcome visitors became more and more alarming . . . Things came to such a pass that communication by water between Rodosto on the European and Panderma on the Asiatic side became impossible.[39]

The *A.E.2* stayed operational in the Sea of Marmora for 5 days and made her presence felt in a most dramatic way, but space does not allow these details to be recounted here. She was holed by gunfire from a patrol boat on 30th April 1915 and sank in the Sea of Marmora. All of the crew were clear before she sank and were captured. Four died in the Prisoner-of-War camps and the rest were freed in 1919.

Thus the role of the *A.E.2* on Anzac Day was an important one. The feat of this band of brave and adventurous men on that day had a significant effect on the course of the Gallipoli campaign. For some reason this feat and its effects have not been given due recognition by historians, nor the popular press, T.V. or other media. Popular films concerning Anzac Day have not even made mention of the *A.E.2*. It is to be hoped that this deficiency will be overcome in future years.

NOTES

1. Diary of *A.E.2* by Able Seaman J. H. Wheat R.A.N. Unpublished, p. 7. Copy given to Author by the late Mr Wheat's family. Another copy held by National War Memorial, Canberra.
2. H. H. G. D. Stoker, *Straws in the Wind* (Herbert Jenkins Ltd., London, 1925) p. 86 et seq. A breezy account written in 1923-1924 and not intended to be an accurate chronology of events.
3. Interested readers are referred to the Official War Histories in particular History of the Great War. Naval Operations. Vol. II, p. 143 and Official History of the War. Military Operations. Gallipoli, Vol. I, p. 94. Events other than those directly affecting *A.E.2* are only touched upon to give a background to the submarines in this campaign.
4. Rear Admiral Sir William S. Jameson, K.B.E. C.B., *Submarine V.C.*, p. 30 (Peter Davies. London 1962). Jameson gives a full account of the submarines role in this campaign.
5. The Commander-in-Chief telegraphed to the Admiralty on 25th March asking for one or two E class to replace *A.E.2* then under repair at Malta . . . see Admiral of the Fleet, Sir Roger Keyes, *The Fight for Gallipoli.*
6. Wheat, Ibid., p. 7.
7. Wheat, Ibid. Also diary by Stoker Petty Officer H. A. Brown R.A.N. of *A.E.2.* Unpublished. One document of Brown's diary is at Mitchell Library, Sydney (MSS) and another at National War Memorial, Canberra. There are small differences between the handwritten document in the Mitchell Library and the typewritten document in the War Memorial.
8. Wheat, Ibid., p. 22.
9. Peter Shankland and Anthony Hunter, *Dardanelles Patrol* (Collins, London, 1964).
10. For a more complete account see Official History of the Great War. Military Operations. Gallipoli. Volume I.
11. Seagee. (Nom de plume for Admiral Charles G. Brodie), *Forlorn Hope* (W. J. Boyce Ltd. 1956).
12. *Straws in the Wind*, op. cit. p. 100.
13. Op. cit., p. 102.
14. Reference to *Saphir*. Ran aground at Nagara Point and lost on 15th January, 1915, in an attempt to repeat the exploit of *B.11* under Lieutenant Holbrook who torpedoed the *Messudieh* in December 1914 for which he was awarded the first naval V.C. of the War. There is a town in New South Wales named after him.
15. Reference to *E.15*.
16. For a brief narrative of earlier exploits of Allied Submarines in the Dardanelles see Brassy's Naval Annual 1916, p. 39 et seq.
17. Stoker records that there was one searchlight at White Cliffs, and another at Kephez Point (where *E.15* was lost); with the main ones at Chanak.
18. Wheat, Ibid., p. 8.
19. As reported in The Official History of Australia in the War of

1914-18, Vol. IX. The R.A.N., A. W. Jose, p. 240 et seq.

20. *A.E.2* was dived at 5:15 a.m. and so would not have heard the furious bombardment which marked the first phase of the landings.
21. *Dardanelles Patrol*, Op. cit. Chapter 2.
22. Details supplied by Turkish Government (through Australian Embassy in Turkey in response to author's request) in a letter from the Director of Foreign Military Attacks Department under cover of letter dated 26th November, 1974.
23. History of the Great War. Military Operations. Gallipoli, Vol. I, Footnote 1 on p. 194. This is confirmed by information supplied to the author, through the good offices of Admiral Sir Alan McNicoll and the Australian Embassy in Turkey, from Turkish historical sources in answer to a request from the author.
24. E. Keble Chatterton, *Dardanelles Dilemma*, p. 226 (Rich & Cowan, London, 1935).
25. Op cit., p. 227.
26. Wheat, Ibid., p. 9.
27. Ibid., p. 10.
28. History of the Great War. Military Operations. Gallipoli. Chapter XV.
29. Op. cit.
30. *Dardanelles Patrol*, pp. 34-35.
31. *Dardanelles Dilemma*, p. 227.
32. History of the Great War. Chapter XV.
33. *Straws in the Wind*, p. 120.
34. *The Examiner*, 1 May, 1965. Article by Tudor Jenkins who saw such a notice.
35. *Dardanelles Patrol*, p. 35.
36. Official History, pp. 247-248.
37. Ibid., pp. 308-309.
38. Ibid., p. 309.
39. *Two Low Ships*, p. 172. Quoted in *Dardanelles Dilemma*.
40. The First Lieutenant was Lieutenant G. A. G. Haggard R.N. who was awarded the D.S.C. and later settled in Australia. His sister married John Charles Wickham, the Brisbane family — see paper presented by Dr C. G. Drury Clarke, F.R. Hist S.Q. Journal Vol. XII at p. 15. The 3 officers were all R.N. and about half of the crew were R.N. and half R.A.N. Of the latter Able Seaman A. C. Nichols, R.A.N. of Brisbane, rose to the rank of Lieutenant-Commander and served here in his home city in later years.